


The image features a dense, repeating pattern of stylized green fern leaves. The leaves are rendered in various shades of green, from a pale, almost white-green to a deep forest green, with visible vein structures. They are set against a solid, light yellow background. The leaves are scattered across the frame, creating a lush, naturalistic feel.

**Kamayán**



# Kamayán

by

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**“If you really want to make a friend, go to someone’s house and eat with him... the people who give you their food give you their heart.”**

- Cesar Chavez



## Preface

Having spent most of my life growing up in America, I felt both physically and culturally distant from my native country of the Philippines. I immigrated to America with my parents and little sister when I was only 3 years old. I had almost no real understanding of the history, the language, or the culture of my people. All my cousins were taught both Tagalog and English living in Manila unlike my siblings and I. The only thing that consistently reminded me of my Filipino heritage were the traditional Filipino meals that my parents would often prepare for us.

Kamayan is a tagalog word which translates to “by hand” and refers to a traditional style of Filipino feasting; typically without the use of utensils. Instead of a liner, waxy banana leaves cover the dining table, with mounds of Filipino food spread among them.

The first Kamayan feast that I ever experienced was two years ago during a visit to the Philippines. It was the first time my direct family had returned to Manila in over seven years for Christmas break and was a trip I will not soon forget. We went all around Manila to see the sights, malls, and museums. We even took a weekend trip to the northern islands of the Philippines, Palawan and saw the most

beautiful beaches I've ever seen . On Christmas Eve, I sat down at the dinner table lined with banana leaves, mounds of my favorite Filipino foods, and family whom I haven't seen in so many years. I noticed that my cousins started grabbing food left and right with their bare hands. Kamayan was such a fun, intimate way to share a meal with family surrounded by my favorite foods. It was an unforgettable dinner that brought my family closer and taught me what a joyous experience sharing food with your loved ones really is.



## Inspiration

When tasked with coming up with the beginning concepts of my senior project, I looked at the past 3 years of my time at Purchase for inspiration; and one of my greatest pleasures was looking back on my role as Public Relations officer for the Asian cultural club on campus HAPA. The Humans of Asian and Polynesian Ancestry club was created in my freshman year. Eager to find a place for myself at college and meet other people I share similar cultures with, I attended the first HAPA meeting with just 6 of us in the room. Since then, I have had the opportunity to watch this club flourish into a welcoming community of some of the most passionate people I have ever met. We planned events centered around Asian celebrations, made a biweekly film festival to showcase minority films to the school, and regularly had discussions based around our cultural backgrounds and meanings of identity. With my deep attachment to this club and the lessons I've learned with my peers in mind, I decided to ask myself the question "What does being a Filipino living in America mean to me?". This question would become the main driving force behind my senior project.



*Humans of Asian and Polynesian Ancestry, Sept 2016 - present*



## First Steps

When I first dove into figuring out what form my senior project would take, my original plan was to create a magazine. I was heavily inspired by Frank Ocean's *Boys Don't Cry* magazine when coming up with an outlet to showcase my Filipino culture through design. A magazine layout allows me the opportunity to fill page after page with whatever content I see that aligns with my theme of exploring my Filipino culture. With the framework set up, it was time to move onto research.

The first step I took into my research was finding visual material that emulates what I have grown to view as Filipino culture. I collected a variety of images from traditional Filipino clothing to San Miguel beers to help present different ways in which I could talk about Filipino culture in my magazine. As I ventured more into looking at traditional Filipino clothing and textiles, I developed an interest in the patterns of Filipino fabrics and explored the possibility of incorporating them into my project. My mother happened to be visiting the Philippines at this time so I asked her to bring back as much indigenous fabrics as she could.

While looking through the fabrics I got from the Philippines, I had the urge to take strips of them and sew them onto my denim jacket. After sewing the fabric strips, I decided to make this a part of my senior project by creating a customization service where people I knew could give me their jackets, pants, shirts, and anything in between for me to custom sew these fabrics onto them. I would then photograph local Filipinos wearing my designs and other traditional clothing as additional content for the magazine.

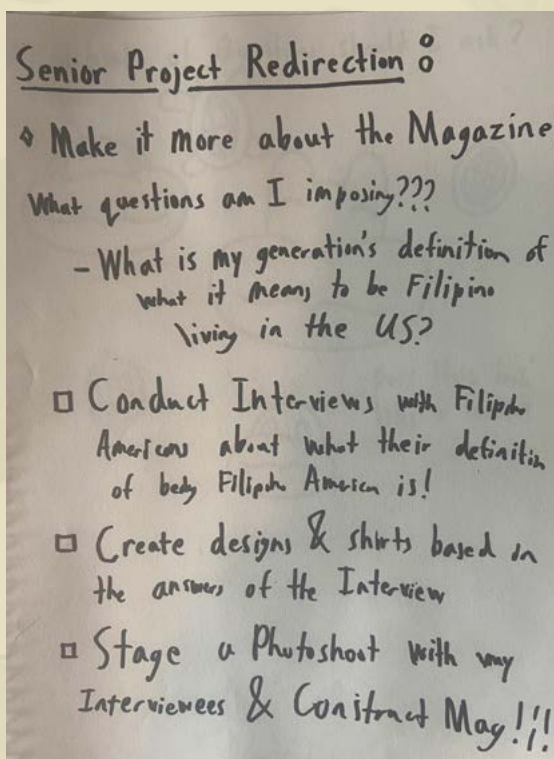


*Custom Jacket, Nov 2019*

## Redirection

After receiving critique and feedback on my project thus far, I decided to take the time over winter break to reorient my thoughts on what the main focus of my project should be. After considering my limited experience with sewing clothes and the authenticity of some of the fabric patterns stemming from other cultures, I moved away from the customization aspect of my project to focus more on the physical construction of the magazine.

I realized that I had to think deeper in what questions I should really ask myself that I want to convey in this project. I was too focused on using my own singular perspective of my Filipino heritage for this project. I forgot that the people I have had such in depth conversations about cultural identity with at HAPA meetings could be a valuable resource on attaining new perspectives of the culture that I have taught myself about. It was at this point that I decided to incorporate other people's views of what living as a Filipino in America means through in-person interviews.



*Notebook Excerpt, Mar 2020*



*HAPA Meeting, Sep 2018*

## An Abrupt Transition

Just as I was beginning to schedule interview dates and start formulating the look of the magazine, the COVID-19 pandemic came to Purchase. All of a sudden, I could no longer be with my friends, I lost access to the facilities where I would construct my magazine, and my time at Purchase came to an abrupt end. For a while, I honestly had no idea where to go from here.

Two weeks into quarantine, I felt myself fall into a monotonous cycle of waking up, going on a walk, shooting some basketballs in my driveway, having dinner, watching a movie or videos on Youtube, going to bed and repeating. Not only did I not really give myself time to work on my senior project, but I found it hard to do anything creative in my house. The sudden environment change was staggering to me in ways I had no preparation for. But I still attempted to make the best of what I had. After those first few weeks, I carved out a space in my garage to serve as my makeshift studio and attempted to bring some fire back into my creative headspace.



*Garage Studio, May 2020*



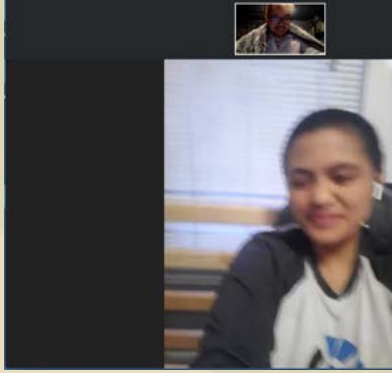
## Virtual Conversations

Generated from my desire for social interaction, I decided to go forward with my interviews. Through Zoom, I was able to converse and interview 7 people about what their experience of being a Filipino growing up in America was like. Everyone had their own unique take on their Filipino culture and how much it pertains to their everyday lives. During the interview, I asked each of them to give me examples of things/activities that allowed them to bond and connect with other Filipinos. While some participants gave answers such as Filipino Youtubers, basketball, karaoke, and laughing about Filipino memes, almost everyone talked about how Filipino food was a medium for them to connect and share their culture with others.

**“Food! I think that’s a big thing for all Filipinos. Food is a very cultural aspect to us. And celebrating anything really. The act of coming together as families, relatives, friends, people you know and eating together, drink, have fun, karaoke is what we bonded over.”**

~Eunice Raposas

Every year, I would always look forward to coming together with my family and friends for holidays, birthdays, even the next Manny Pacquiao fight; we took any opportunity that came to celebrate together and of course have delicious food during the party. It allows us to build communities outside of just our families as well. You ask neighbors, family friends, and even strangers to come to Filipino parties. A Filipino party is a welcoming space for anyone to come and have a good time.



*Interview: Aya Aragon, Apr 2020*



*Interview: Eunice Raposas and Julian Bugarin, Apr 2020*



*Interview: Bevin Macutay, Apr 2020*



*Interview: Jan Kayas, Apr 2020*



*Interview: Miguel Malig, Apr 2020*



*Interview: Kayla Cariaga, Apr 2020*

## Food Connects Us

It's also just exciting to share a piece of your culture to others through your food. I remember one of my earliest memories moving to a new school district in the 4th grade was a cultural day where students could bring in food from their heritage to share with your classmates for this big classroom buffet. I asked my mom if I could bring lumpia shanghai (Filipino egg roll) to class and we ordered a tray from the local Filipino store we were very close with. When it was time for the students to start picking out from the spread of food, I sat in front of my tray of lumpia eager to see who would give it a try; and to my surprise, everyone in my class wanted some. My classmates and teachers told me how much they loved this dish that they have never tried before. I even remember some kids begging me to give them more lumpia too. The excitement I felt of sharing a piece of my cultural identity through food and people actually loving it was an unforgettable experience.

With the quarantine still in effect and my apprehension about the uncertain future rising, I needed to find a way to cope and meditate with my thoughts to alleviate some of the stress. Throughout my time at home, I've continued to consistently sketch a bit everyday in my journal. The little bit of time I allow myself everyday to just write/draw about my thoughts has continued to help me get through these isolating times.



*Drawn Expressions, Mar 2020*

Over the weeks, I took up sketching the Filipino foods I missed so much along with the favorite Filipino foods of my interviewees. After sketching the rough designs in my notebook, I translated these designs to be recreated in Photoshop along with custom text indicating the dish. I decided to make these designs into stickers as the physical manifestation of my senior project. Under the name Kamayan, I intend to sell these sticker packs online for those who miss connecting over all the Filipino food we've grown to know and love; and also to remind people of the connections that food has given us. Restaurants may be closed and we may not be able to have our extravagant parties for now, but it's important for us to remember what truly takes priority. Our health. Our loved one's safety. And to look forward to the days we can come together and share a meal once again.

## Stickers



*Sisig Sticker, Apr 2020*

# Stickers



*Vienna Sausage Sticker, Apr 2020*



*Sweet Spaghetti Sticker, Apr 2020*



*Dinuguan Sticker, May 2020*



*Ensaymada Sticker, May 2020*



*Sinigang Sticker, May 2020*



*Halo Halo Sticker, May 2020*

# Mockups



Sticker Mockup #1, May 2020

Sticker Mockup #2, May 2020



Sticker Mockup #5, May 2020

## Bibliography

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